

Listing of Claims:

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1. (currently amended) An apparatus for providing e-mail notification to a user of an interactive television system including customer premise equipment capable to receive an e-mail message from a data communication network and transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the e-mail message, the apparatus comprising:

~~a customer premise equipment capable to receive an e-mail message from a data communication network and transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the e-mail message; and~~

a portable stereo communication device, independent of the interactive television system, to generate stereo audio and to allow a third party to communicate with a user, wherein the portable stereo communication device is further to receive the alert signal and to provide notification to a user in response to the alert signal without displaying the e-mail message.

2-27. (canceled).

28. (currently amended) An article of manufacture, comprising:

a machine-readable medium having stored thereon instructions to:
receive, by a customer premise equipment, an instant message from a data communication network;

in response to the received instant message, send an alert signal to a portable ~~stereo communication device for generating stereo audio~~ the portable stereo device ~~being independent of an interactive television system; and~~

in response to the alert signal, provide notification ~~by the remote control~~ portable stereo device about the received instant message without displaying the instant message.

29. (currently amended) An apparatus for notifying a user of an interactive television system about an incoming instant message, the apparatus comprising:

- means for receiving an instant message from a data communication network;
- communicatively coupled to the receiving means, means for sending an alert signal in response to the received instant message; and
- communicatively coupled to the receiving means, a handheld portable stereo device to generate stereo audio and to receive the alert signal and provide notification about the received instant message without displaying the instant message ~~means for allowing a user to engage in at least two-way audio communication with a third party.~~

30-36 (canceled).

37. (currently amended) An apparatus for providing instant message e-mail notification to a user of an interactive television system including customer premise equipment capable to receive an instant message from a data communication

network and a transmitter capable to transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the instant message, the apparatus comprising:

~~a customer premise equipment capable to receive a message from a data communication network and including a transmitter capable to transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the message; and~~

a portable stereo device to generate stereo audio telephone including a receiver capable to receive the alert signal indicative of the received instant message, the portable stereo device telephone to provide notification to a user in response to the alert signal.

38. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the message includes an email message.

39. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the message includes an instant message.

40-41. (canceled).

42. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the notification includes a light signal from the portable stereo device telephone.

43. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 42 wherein the portable stereo remote control device includes a specifically-designated LED to provide the light signal.

44. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the notification includes a sound signal from the portable stereo device telephone.

45. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the notification includes vibration from the portable stereo device telephone.

46. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 37 further comprising a television communicatively coupled to the customer premise equipment and capable to display the received message.

47. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the customer premise equipment includes a set top box.

48. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the portable stereo device telephone is incapable of displaying the message.

49. (currently amended) A method of notifying a user of an interactive television system about incoming e-mail and instant messages, the method comprising:

receiving, by a customer premise equipment, an e-mail or instant message from a data communication network;

in response to the received message, sending an alert signal to a portable stereo device capable of generating stereo audio telephone; and

In response to the alert signal, the portable stereo device telephone providing notification indicative of the message without displaying the message.

50. (previously presented) The method of claim 49 wherein the customer premise equipment includes a set top box.

51-55. (canceled).

56. (currently amended) The method of claim 49 wherein providing notification comprises providing a light signal from the portable stereo device telephone.

57. (currently amended) The method of claim 49 wherein providing the notification comprises providing a sound signal from the portable stereo device telephone.

58. (currently amended) The method of claim 49 wherein providing the notification comprises providing vibration from the portable stereo device telephone.

59. (currently amended) ~~An apparatus~~ system for providing e-mail notification to a user of an interactive television system, the system apparatus comprising:

a customer premise equipment capable to receive a message from a data communication network and including a transmitter capable to transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the message; and

a portable handheld stereo device to generate stereo audio including a receiver capable to receive the alert signal indicative of the received message, the portable stereo device to provide notification to a user in response to the alert signal.

60. (canceled).

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